

5416

Good Afternoon-my name is Lyne Stokes and I am an educator in the YA DMHAS System of care. There is a window of opportunity in the YA age group as concerns begin to emerge when most youth are either ignored, end up in the criminal justice system, put into a drug treatment program or committed to a psychiatric hospital without their needs being met. The children in the State are our future. Services to our future should never be on a "pass along" and "band-aid" type basis. These opportunities must never be lost.

It is actually criminal that HB 5416 even has to exist. These types of team actions should have been taking place for years. If the types of simple guidelines listed in HB 5416 already existed there would have not even been a need to discuss where our budget money is going to go.

As one of the many young adults students I talked with about this issue said. "Hey- This is a no brainer. How come they aren't working together? Maybe they should take one of our team building lessons!" She is a product of the DCF system of care and now is in the YA DHMAS system of care. She entered the YA DHMAS system without the necessary continuation of care from DCF. She had been bounced around from town to town and program to program without a plan of recovery. If the types of services that are currently being offered in the DHMAS had been developed in partnership with DCF there might not be such a need to increase the budget for young adults. There might not be such a strong need to develop educational programs like mine in the YA system.

Thank goodness DMHAS has an amazing YA program. The foresight this agency has for kids "aging up" is phenomenal. The DHMAS YA services around the state are staffed by the most dedicated professionals who are passionate about the services they provided

I was part of a Raise the Age Listening session that DCF held last fall. This listening session involved input from parents advocates regarding the services and systems of DCF and when the issues were. When I received one of the early drafts of the results of the sessions and the plans involved I said one of my YA student's favorite words. DUH! An collaboration with DHMAS could have saved them a lot of time and money in developing this study. DHMAS has been "catching" DCF kids aging out for years. They now are on the road to developing the expertise of what it takes go help a YA become a successful happy hopeful joyful contributing member of our state. Recovery is facilitated by a meaningful role in life.

A collaboration between DCF and DHMAS can only improve our future and the future is with our kids. As an educator in the DMHAS system of care I have meet many talented Young Adults who work hard to spread the message of recovery through their gifts. Their passion of using their talents to help others is inspiring. They are proud of who they are and excited about what is happening in their life. The YA's are conscientious of the fact that to keep their recovery they must give it away. The support of DCF and the DHMAS system of care in the State of Connecticut is critical to their long term recovery. It is important that these type of collaborative opportunities further educate everyone to the fact that there is a meaningful life full of hope and joy and passion in recovery that we all deserve . The future of the State depends on it.